CHAPTER - 4

STONEY NATIVES OF CANADA: A PROFILE

4.1 HISTORY AND TRADITIONS

4.2 SOCIAL STRUCTURE

4.3 ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

4.4 CULTURE

4.5 WINDS OF CHANGE
Stoney Country: Yesterday and Today

B.C.:  
- Morley Reserve.  
- Siphum Reserve.  
- Eden Valley Reserve.  
- Stoney Country before the time Treaty No. 7 was made in 1877.  
- Assiniboine (Stoney) migrations during the 17th Century.
4.1 HISTORY AND TRADITION

About a century ago the Stoney natives of Canada, whose total population was estimated to be 10,000; wandered mostly over the prairies from Missouri to the Red and Saskatchewan rivers in search of buffaloes. They are described as the descendents of Dakota Sioux from which clan they had gradually broken away with the passage of time. It would be interesting to record how these people came to be called 'Stones'. Earlier they were known as 'Assiniboines'. In Ojibway language it meant 'Stone Sioux'. These people had a unique method of making soup by putting hot stones in a special type of bowl full of vegetables, meat and water. These were the hot stones which cooked the meat and vegetables and prepared the soup.

The early white explorers from Europe named them as 'Stone People' because of the strange use of hot stones made by these people. Today they are called Stoney Indians or Stoney natives. Most of the Stoney natives live on the main reserves at Morley (near Calgary) a few live on the Reserves like Eden valley and Big horn. After signing the Treaty 7 in 1877, the Stoney natives preferred Bow River Valley in the vicinity of Morley Ville, where they possess their main Reserves these days.

Today the Stoney's have three main bands - Bear Spaw Band, Chiniki Band and Wesley Band (Good Stoney Band). The enclosed map displays the exact location of these bands in the Province of Alberta. Traditionally the Stoney's were wild nomadic tribes and hunting of
A VIEW OF THE TRADITIONAL DANCE

A VIEW OF THE POW-WOW CULTURAL FESTIVAL
buffaloes was their main occupation. The buffaloes were everything in the life of the plain Indian of those days. The meat provided food, the brain was used for tanning, the hides were used either for manufacturing of robes or were divested of the hair, and made into teepee covers, clothing, mocassins, bags and shields. The sinews were converted into thread and hoofs provided glue, while even the stomach was often used for cooking food in. Almost every native person belongs to a band. The band is known as a group of Indians who have common interest, culture, land and historical connections or origins. When the federal government first divided Indian Tribes into Bands. There were many anamulies like patrilineral or matrilinear descent.

The rapid disappearance of buffaloes significantly affected the lives of the Stoney in the early eighties and forever put an end to their Nomadic character. They were compelled to sign the treaties with the whitemen and were kept on the 'Reserves' the largest of which is located in Morley, thirty miles from Banff (Alberta). Here they adopted the White Man's way of life and gradually moved in the direction of modernization and amalgamation with the White Society.

4.2 SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In order to understand the socio-educational perceptions of the Stoney natives today, it was considered essential to look into their daily pastime activities, in relation to the past and existing culture and environment. The personal data relating to their age, sex, education, income, type of dwelling, material possession, food habits, dress habits,
life style, rituals of birth, marriage, death and initiation which influence the educability are analysed below:

**TABLE NO. 2**

**AGE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group in years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 and below</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 35</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 and above</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is apparent from the above table that 88 percent Stonies are between 25 to 45 years of age. They consisted of both whole time workers as well as students doing part-time jobs. This shows that during the past 20 years the Stonies have developed an urge to do odd jobs in order to earn their livelihood.

The 1981 census gives details of age-wise distribution of various categories of the Natives. The ratio of young people to the overall population is growing. The proportion of the natives between 15 - 44 years is quite similar to the non-natives.

With the spread of education and after acquiring educational skills the stonies aspired to get prime employment although fewer jobs were available to them in the area. At the same time, the researcher
observed in her survey that some Stoneys in the age between 25-45 years were not doing any job simply because they were getting royalty that accrued from the oil reserves in their territory.

Very interestingly some older people above 50 years confessed that they preferred not to do any job in order to preserve their tribal beliefs and retain their cultural identity.

An elderly lady (above 75) was of the firm opinion that children getting more education tend to move away from their tribal culture and society. Thus there is a perceptible desire among the older generation Stoneys to maintain their culture and tribal values and this desire could offer resistance to the spread of modernization of education for younger children.

After this brief historical sketch of the settlement of the Stoney Indians among the people of Canada and having pointed out that the tribal Stoney as yet has not got completely lost into the world of White Canadians, it is now appropriate to provide a comprehensive profile of the Stoney Indians - especially those studied in depth by

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1 Morley has natural gas well. This reserve earns millions of dollars from these wells. Most of the developments are possible only because of the dollars they are getting as royalty. Over the past eight years royalty is increasing. Because of this royalty, Stoneys have started self-government in 1969. This decision was taken by STC (Stoney Tribal Council). They have constructed buildings of teepee (tradition style) shapes for Administrative Offices. Ten percent of this oil royalty is used for education.
The researcher. The very nature and extent of the present study dictated that only a representative sample of the population be studied in depth. The sample was selected at random and the Profile of the Stoney Indians as they are today is based on this sample.

The researcher visited Morley in the province of Alberta and interviewed the Stoney males and females of different age groups having different levels of education.

TABLE NO. 3
SEX-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it may be observed from the above table that out of total sample 60 percent were males and 40 percent were female respondents. The researcher further categorised the females according to their marital status in the table no.4.
The researcher observed in her survey that 35 percent women were unmarried and had kids. It was felt after holding discussions and interviews of women with different levels of education and different types of jobs that the concept of marriage or virginity is not held in very high esteem by the natives. It was generally believed that the "Children are the gifts given by the Great Spirit". Kids born to girls at tender age are looked after by their mothers. It is the duty of the elder lady in the house. It is a part of their culture. Explanation for this may be like this earlier these natives were having nomadic life, wandering here and there for hunting. The lives of the youth were very risky. They may or may not come back after having gone on hunting sprees. Sometimes these natives suffered from an epidemic like small-pox. So the community conveniently accepted the traditional notion of increasing the population.

**TABLE NO. 4**

MARITAL STATUS-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE IN THE SAMPLE.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unwed mothers with kids</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legally married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married but separated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n=20)
Of the women whom the researcher met only 10 percent were legally married. Once they are married, separation is not very common. From the rest 50 percent of the women were found unmarried. These were mostly university students. The researcher interviewed them and noted that if these educated girls fail to get suitable well-educated matches in their own community, then they get married to non-native boys. This is another reason why technically the native population is decreasing. According to law if a woman gets married to a non-native, she loses the status of a native. Even if a girl of 12 years of age gets pregnant she is allowed to sit in the classroom and no stigma is attached to pregnancy. No social stigma is attached to unwed motherhood, or to having sexual life outside the domain of marriage.

Case Study

An unwed mother who works at a day-care centre has one child and she wants to get him higher education so that he may develop his personality and get rid of the bad habits (alcoholism and drug addiction), and thus lead a good life. In her motherly perception, education could mean to develop a better human being redeemed from the abuses of primitive tribal existence.

On the other hand, the researcher met an unwed mother of a son of 3 years of age. She was a school teacher living a comfortable life. She wanted to raise the child with all formal and informal education. While she preferred modern school education, yet she believed that tradition cannot be taught in schools. She emphasized that importance and values of these traditions and cultures cannot be
learned from books. Modern school education to her was incomplete in the sense that it could not impart tribal values and culture to children. Census figures for the type of families relating to Registered Indian and all other families in Canadian Province/Territorio, 1981 are given below:

**TABLE NO. 5**

**TYPES OF FAMILIES IN ALBERTA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Families</th>
<th>Husband, Wife and Children</th>
<th>Father and Children</th>
<th>Mother and Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75.8%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE NO. 6**

**EDUCATION-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterature</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Primary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upto Middle</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Matric</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table no. 6 shows that there was one illiterate person in the total sample, 22 percent respondents were matriculates and 28 percent were university students. The researcher tallied this data with the statistics published by various authorities and found that literacy and education figures were fairly high in the state of Alberta where our sample population is located.

The Stoney are not very much satisfied with the present system of education. There is fairly wide spread resentment against the kind of subjects taught, the language of instruction, the non-native leadership to education, the administrative control outside the native Indians, the ignoring of tribal culture and heritage etc. A sample of some of the reactions and opinions follows:

"We do not need some one to come into the community and tell us who has a problem. We want some one to come and work with the teachers to develop programmes to help these students."

There is a big gap between educational curriculum and its implementation in classroom. Educators and parents both agreed that this gap must be filled. There must be a need based education programme.

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1 Aklavik, Learning Tradition and Change, Yellowknife, (Central Committee on Education, Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, 1982), p. 34.
One informant from the University of Alberta said there was a need for good teachers. Native students are working in a unique and challenging situation, still they have little skill. There must be some incentive to the teacher to enter this profession. Training must be more attractive. First priority must be given to train the native teachers.

Some respondents felt that the few native language speakers who acquired teaching experience in classrooms, should be encouraged and education up to 5th class should be in native language so that children could learn things quickly. After 5th class there may be use of English as an additional language and after middle, English could be taken up as medium of instruction. This feeling is found both among Indian Tribes and Canadian Natives. To encourage the participation of teachers in new educational programmes, these should be offered to the community. There must be collaboration with the University Departments so that results of recent researches and new developments in education could be built into the programmes.

The researcher found that the Stoneys needed sympathetic skilled professional teachers who could understand the native language and culture.

What emerged from the discussions and interviews with the informants was that while planning programmes for Indian students, the following important variables should be kept in mind:

- Developing feelings of self-esteem, self-worth in the mind of individual child;
- providing re-inforcement and subsequent extension of the individual's pride in his cultural heritage;

- making provision for learning opportunities that will help to eliminate sources of cultural conflict;

- making it possible for individual to become increasingly adaptable to social change, its rapidity and its consequences.¹

A minor but relevant observation was that the children of the university educated parents have much more interest in books than the children of illiterate parents. But when the data on every-day mathematics was examined it was found that in these tribal societies illiterates are also able to count, add and subtract even if they never went to school.

The researcher had only one illiterate amongst the sample but at the same time she noted that drop out rate was quite high at Morley School. Different respondents gave different reasons about drop out ratios - a few reasons noted by the researcher on the basis of personal observation and discussion are given below:

1. Since the native children get money as royalty from oil wells they develop bad habits like eating candies and chewing tobacco leaves.

2. If there is any death in the community, children are not allowed to go to school during the period of mourning which lasts from seven to twelve days. Neither they are allowed to play. Male members get their heads shaved off when an elder dies in the family.

3. Though there are buses to take the children from home to schools yet there are quite a few students who are living far away from schools and there are no bus routes between their place of living and the school.

4. When parents are illiterate or have very little education they are not aware of the benefits of education.

5. With the start of summer, drop out rate is maximum because they have special native functions like Pow-wow Dance, Sun Dance etc. For which they start preparations a month ahead and these functions last for weeks. The researcher witnessed one such festival of Pow-wow dance.

The researcher noted that people living on the reserves mostly do not think much. The researcher interviewed a lady working as a cook at a lodge. She did not have any aspiration in life. She was an unwed mother with three kids. She just laughed when the researcher asked about her children's future. A 12th class student stated the condition of the modern native youth who is in a dilemma because he vasculates between the demands of the modern life and the taboos of the traditional living. He explained that the youth does not like to
follow the traditional life such as hunting and trapping, and at the same time there is no skilled jobs for him. As a result, he feels that he cannot support himself either way, and hence is in a fix what to do.

4.3 ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

The economic determinents of the Stoney native's living is related to their attitude to education, and this important factor is ascertained by studying the economic structure on the following tables:

TABLE NO. 7

OCCUPATION-WIST DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE

\[(n=50)\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled labour</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time jobs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of the table no.7 shows that 83 percent native people are employed.
The following table further shows the job-wise distribution of the sample and the percentage of "off-reserve" and "on Reserves", of the community.

**TABLE NO. 8**

**ON RESERVE AND OFF RESERVE OCCUPATION OF THE SAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>On Reserve</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled labour</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Part time job</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table No. 8 shows that 8 percent natives were teachers. Almost 92 percent teachers were whites. When the researcher discussed this matter with informants and parents of the school students, she noted that the native parents wanted their children could be taught by
the native teachers upto school level. The respondents with education upto middle level were very much attached to their nativism and culture. They emphasized that their children should be taught upto primary in their own native language and it was possible only if the teacher himself or herself is a native one.

Case Study

One girl Ms. Buffalo who was doing her graduation. She said that she did not want to go back to her community, as she did not like to lead a very primitive type of life. She was staying in the university hostel which was fully air-conditioned. She was doing a part-time job also. She was almost westernized in her habits. She liked modern dress, food and western life style of living.

In fact the researcher noted that 90 percent graduates among the natives from the university did not want to go back to the reserves. Yet ten percent indeed expressed their sense of belonging to their community and to serve it. Thus, it is this important segment of 10% whose love for the community acts as the binding force and is responsible for the maintenance of culture and tradition amongst the tribals.

The table no. 8 shows that 22 percent university students are doing part-time jobs. They belong to the Stoney community. They are getting royalty from their Oil Reserves, besides doing some part-time job as well. Most of them stated that after getting a university degree there are not adequate job opportunities at the reserves. So they stay back in the cities: Calgary or Edmonton or in urban places.
where they can get good jobs. The table shows that only 8 percent native people work as labourers. The low level of labour force participation reflects a continuing reliance on the oil royalties, university help for education as well as dependence on the support available under the social security schemes.

It was observed that very few jobs were available for the educated and well qualified people at the reserves. At the same time, the jobs for the skilled workers like carpenters, construction workers and repairing of houses or labourers jobs at the oil wells for oil extractions are very much available. The researchers noted that all well qualified teachers on the Morley school belonged to the White community. Those teachers who came from the native community were educated not more than the middle standard.

The occupational patterns adopted by the Stoneys, their location on the Reserves and the fact that no industrial activity is permitted in and around the reserves have kept the income levels of the Stoneys within check and below the national average. Table No.9 shows that only 4 percent of the sample had income above 5000 dollars while more than 60 percent of the sample earned between 500 - 1500 dollars per month. However, most of them received additional money from the oil royalties and altogether their economic condition is fairly good. Since employment patterns are unsatisfactory and easy money comes from the 'Oil', a number of youths had turned to alcohol and drugs as means of occupying themselves.
TABLE NO. 9

INCOME-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income groups</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income per month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500 - $1500</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above $1500 - $2500</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above $2500 - $5000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above $5000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income not revealed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be noted that 60 percent natives earn 500-1500 dollars per month and 20 percent natives earn 1500-2500 dollars per month. Councillors and Principals of the schools are getting above 5000 dollars per month. This shows that higher the qualification the more the wages i.e. income. Every Stoney whether he or she is a very small baby has his or her share in the benefits of the Oils.

Case Study

A student whom the researcher met at the University of Calgary was doing graduation. His father was a councillor getting 1200 dollars per month. He was educated upto 10th and his mother was also educated upto the 8th. The boy lived in the university hostel and
was doing well in studies. This informant had two brothers and one sister. All were studying in Calgary. The researcher discussed with the informant and noted that educated parents wanted to keep their children away from the atmosphere of the reserve where many youths developed habits of alcoholism or drug addiction. One respondent was the son of a Chief. He also expressed similar feelings.

The natives who are educated have good earnings and lead better life. Almost all the respondents have mixed food habits and mixed dress habits. All educated respondents favoured to live in the western type of houses.

Teepee or the traditional house was a small log structure with roofs of logs and an outer covering of sod. Each house had a mud fireplace and mud floors and no windows, but had translucent raw hides as windows. Some improvements have been made now in these old traditional houses. There are planks and shingle roofs. Houses have proper windows now, planks flooring and have proper plaster. They have wood burning stoves for cooking and heating purposes. Even today people on the reserves move to teepee houses in summer.

There are very few modern houses at Morley which have the facilities of central heating, running water and indoor plumbing. Almost all houses have electricity.

4.4 CULTURE

The researcher observed in the natives the influence of modernization in their dress, religion and changing life style. From
DRUM BEATING BY THE STONEYS

STONEY YOUTHS IN A FESTIVE MOOD
amongst the women who used to wear long traditional dresses, reaching down to the knees with elaborate embroidery in earlier days, now most of them especially the younger generation women have started wearing jeans, skirts and other modern dresses.

The traditional dress for men was shirt of elk skin, fringed with animal tails and head of animals. But now men also have taken to modern dresses such as pants and shirts. Traditional head dresses were also used by men. Now such head dresses can be seen only in museums or in some traditional old houses which they use during traditional festivals like Sun Dance and Pow-wow.

A major event in the life style of the stoney's occured in 1840 when a Methodist missionary Robert T. Rundle was sent to that region. His teachings were so impressive that the Stoneys started embracing Christianity. In 1873, a permanent mission was built at Morley Ville on the Bow River. A small school was also started which was followed by a larger residential school. Almost all the Stoneys are Christians but they celebrate their traditional festivals and other rituals as well.

There is a beautiful restaurant 'NAKODA' and a NAKODA institute at Morley. The Institute is a good learning centre for local and the Off-reserve communities. It provides all educational facilities.

Inspite of modernization process, the tribals retain bits of their religion and culture. "It is a Pow-wow time, people all across the country check the oil in their Trucks, vans and road master trailers,"
THE TRIBAL POLICE STATION

BUFFALOS AT THE STONEY PARK
preparing to hit the Pow-wow celebration at Edmonton (Alberta)"\(^1\)

The researcher witnessed a Pow-wow held at the Saddle Lake from 27 June - 30 June. The festivals are becoming popular because they attract the natives from all the bands who get a chance to live together in a festive mood. Display of their heroic deeds, archery, group singing and group dances are some of the attractions of the Pow-wow. The religious spirit behind the celebration of these festivals and dances is aptly described thus:

"Native religion is based on vision and legends; all rituals are interwined and they are explained and connected by visions, unlike many other spiritual beliefs. Sun Dance is passed from one generation to other and is maintained in the modified form. Sun dance was based on the idea of man's search for one's self and search for protector and peace of mind through sacrifice."\(^2\)

Sun Dance, Eagle Dance, Buffalo Dance, Scalp Dance and Medicine Dance are religious dances, which are still practised amongst the Stoneys but are not performed openly in public.


THE TRADITIONAL STONEY DRESS

A SCENE OF MORLEY - THE STONEY VILLAGE
4.5 WINDS OF CHANGE

Canada is a highly technological society. Its effect on the native Indians is inevitable. The Stoney have definitely undergone a big change over the last two decades. Most of the educated Stoney natives of Morley speak English and live Western style of life. They are conscious of their aims and are now trying to take control of their destiny after having lived in a colonial situation for a long time.

Inspite of having been influenced by the technological advancement of the country, the Stoney natives have maintained their identity and culture. On the one hand, they have given preference to education, on the other, they refuse to be dispossessed of their culture and tradition. In this regard, it is rightly stated:

"People are emerging from tribal communities with bicultural identities. They have an identity firmly anchored in cultural world of their people at the same time they possess the skill and knowledge required to succeed in the larger society."¹

The Stoney natives, especially the educated youth, mostly the university students, confess that education has enabled them to inculcate awareness of social and economic development and better living standards.